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FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0350  
INFO ECOWAS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0008  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0007  
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS  
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 0009  
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHINGTON DC  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABUJA 000187

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AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE PASS TO AMEMBASSY MALABO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2020/02/18  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [ECOWAS](#) [NI](#)  
SUBJECT: ECOWAS HEADS OF STATE DISCUSS REGIONAL SECURITY, SELECT  
CHAIRPERSON AND INTERIM PRESIDENT

CLASSIFIED BY: James P. McAnulty, Political Counselor, STATE, POL;  
REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

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SUMMARY

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11. (C) Nigerian Acting President Goodluck Jonathan opened the 37th Ordinary Summit of the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) Heads of State and Governments (HOS) Meeting in Abuja February 16 with a call for increased transparency in government and "redoubled efforts" at consolidating democracy. He asked member states to fight corruption and begin implementing "best practices" of good governance. ECOWAS issued a final communique announcing the selection of Jonathan as Chairperson (in place of ailing President Yar'Adua) and septuagenarian Ghanaian Victor Gbeho as Interim President (in place of outgoing President Dr. Chambas), both until December 2010. On Guinea, the HOS supported ongoing mediation efforts of Burkinabe President Blaise Compaore and security sector reform (SSR) initiatives by Senegalese General Cisse. On Niger, ECOWAS leaders expressed regret over the stalled negotiations between ECOWAS Mediator Nigerian General Abdulsalami Abubakar and Niger President Tandja. Expressing "total frustration" over Tandja's refusal to compromise, Abubakar asked to step down, but later agreed to stay at the Jonathan's request. Leaders called for the appointment of an African Union (AU) Special Envoy on Niger, and Senegal President Wade made a separate, unsolicited offer to assist in the Niger mediation efforts. On Cote d'Ivoire, ECOWAS leaders recommended no sanctions. Outgoing ECOWAS President Chambas told Ambassador the evening of February 17 that all of West African HOS were concerned about "Nigeria's stability." They agreed that one way to show that the region was behind Nigeria and wanted it to succeed was giving Jonathan the nod as full ECOWAS Chairman. At the closing ceremony, HOS also signed an agreement between the Commission and Sierra Leone on development of a new Freetown logistics depot at the Lungi Airport.

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GOODLUCK JONATHAN IS NEW ECOWAS CHAIRMAN  
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12. (C) The ECOWAS Heads of State (HOS) elected Nigerian Acting

President Jonathan as the full Chairman of ECOWAS, replacing hospitalized President Yar'Adua until the end of December 2010. Peace and Security Commissioner Colonel Mahamane Toure, who attended the closed-door meeting, told PolCouns and PolMilOff February 17 that the decision to elect Jonathan was not controversial. Instead, HOS "expressed relief" that stakeholders had reached a peaceful resolution to the lingering "power vacuum" in Nigeria. Toure intimated that a few countries (including Liberia, according to a Canadian diplomat) had expressed interest in becoming the new chairperson. They all "bowed out," however, after Jonathan's appointment as Acting President in Nigeria. According to Toure, everyone "welcomed and congratulated" Jonathan at the HOS meeting.

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GHANAIAN GBEHO APPOINTED ECOWAS COMMISSION PRESIDENT

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13. (C) Member nations appointed Ghanaian James Victor Gbeho as interim President of the ECOWAS Commission. The 75-year-old Gbeho served as Ghana's Foreign Minister from 1997 to 2001, Member of Parliament from 2001 to 2005, and currently Foreign Policy Advisor to Ghanaian President Mills. Colonel Toure had hoped that the HOS would appoint a permanent president because seven ECOWAS

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Commissioners and the ECOWAS Vice President will turn over in December 2010, leading to further uncertainty throughout the year for the regional body.

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GUINEA: SECURITY SECTOR REFORM AS THE WAY FORWARD

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14. (U) The final communique (which Embassy forwarded to the Department February 16 -- ref), hailed the January 15 Ouagadougou Joint Declaration as a "positive and critical step in the effort to restore constitutional order and end the crisis in Guinea." The statement praised Guinean stake-holders for their maturity and commended the productive mediation efforts of Burkinabe President Blaise Compaore. ECOWAS HOS urged continued dialogue and cooperation during the transition process, especially completion of preparations for the holding of free and transparent elections within six months. The communique supported a "joint ECOWAS-AU-UN cooperation mission" led by Senegalese General Lamine Cisse to support defense and security sector reform in Guinea. The leaders reiterated the need for members of the National Transition Council, Head of the Transition Government, members of the National Council for Democracy and Development (CNDD), Prime Minister, Government of National Unity members, and active duty members of the defense and security forces to refrain from running as candidates in the next elections.

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NIGER: ABUBAKAR WANTS TO STEP DOWN

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15. (C) On Niger, the HOS commended efforts by ECOWAS Mediator

Nigerian General Abubakar, but criticized the "limited progress" made since December 21, 2009. They urged parties to show greater flexibility, end the current impasse, and return the country to "constitutional legality." A French diplomat told PolMilOff that during the meeting Abubakar had asked to step aside as Mediator out of "total frustration" with President Tandja's unwillingness to budge or compromise. He agreed to continue after receiving pleas from Jonathan and an ECOWAS promise to seek assistance from the AU. The Final Communique requested that the AU appoint a Special Envoy on Niger. Separately, Senegal President Wade volunteered to help facilitate mediation efforts. Toure remarked that Wade's offer was "totally unsolicited, surprising the other heads of state." Canadian and French diplomats speculated that Wade's involvement may be motivated out of self-interest, in a desire to reach a compromise that would justify future action by him in Senegal. When asked about Wade's motives February 17, Toure agreed with this assessment.

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COTE D'IVOIRE: NO STRONG STATEMENT AND NO SANCTIONS  
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¶6. (C) ECOWAS HOS urged all political stake-holders in Cote d'Ivoire to take appropriate measures to continue the peace process in accordance with relevant provisions of the Ouagadougou Political Agreements. The Final Communique urged continue dialogue leading to the "finalization of the electoral list and the fixing of a firm date" for elections. A French diplomat, who spoke to a Special Assistant to President Wade, claimed to PolMilOff February 16 that

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Wade had played a major role in "watering-down" the language of the communique and preventing sanctions.

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LUNGI AIRPORT LOGISTICS DEPOT AGREEMENT SIGNED  
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¶7. (SBU) During the closing ceremony the HOS signed an agreement with Sierra Leone to open a new logistics depot at the Lungi airport in Freetown. The U.S. Mission requested a copy of the agreement from ECOWAS and will forward it to the Department upon receipt. Colonel Toure stated that the agreement assigns two parcels of land at the airport to ECOWAS, one for the facility and one for a residence compound. The agreement also permits land development and construction of buildings. ECOWAS reportedly has allocated 2.5 million dollars from next year's budget for commencement of the project.

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Participants  
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¶8. (U) Participants included Benin President Dr. Thomas Boni Yayi, Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaore, Cape Verde President Pedro Pires, Ghana President John Evans Atta Mills, Guinea-Bissau President Malam Bacai Sanha, Liberia President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Nigeria Acting President Goodluck Jonathan,

Senegal President Maitre Abdoulaye Ade, Sierra Leone President Ernest Bai Koroma, Togolese President Faure Essozimna Gnassingbe, Gambian Vice President Aja Dr. Isatou Njie Saidy, Cote d'Ivoire Foreign Minister Youssouf Bakayoko, Mali Minister of Malians in the Diaspora and African Integration Dr. Badara Aliou Macalou, AU Special Envoy to Guinea Ibrahima Fall, and United Nations Secretary General for West West Africa Special Representative Said Djinnit. Niger and Guinea remain suspended from ECOWAS. The HOS listened to presentations by Niger's Prime Minister and a spokesperson for the Coordination of Forces for Democracy and Republic (CFDR), representing the opposition coalition.

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COMMENT

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19. (C) The appointment of an interim ECOWAS Commission President has frustrated EU, French, Swiss, and German diplomats attending the summit because such action will likely delay necessary institutional reform at ECOWAS. The communique did not address the existing hiring freeze, and ECOWAS officials have previously expressed reluctance to hire or make institutional changes after Chambas announced his departure. END COMMENT.  
SANDERS